

Remarks Honoring the 2011 World Series Champion St. Louis Cardinals
January 17, 2012

The President. Thank you. It is wonderful to be here. It is wonderful to be joined by my wife. It is her birthday today. When we first married, it was a little controversial that she was 20 years younger than me, but—[*laughter*—now it seems to have worked out okay. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. I'm 48. [*Laughter*]

The President. And I want to join her in congratulating the world champion St. Louis Cardinals. I won't lie, I'm a little disappointed I had to leave my White Sox jacket in the closet for another year. [*Laughter*] But this is a special team, both because of what they do for our military and their families, but also what they did on the field last season. And I know we've got Mayor Slay from St. Louis and some Members of Congress who agree with me. I see the delegation here; they're beaming. [*Laughter*] They are quite pleased.

Now, when we talk about baseball, we're talking about a sport, obviously, with a long history. Over 200,000 games have been played since Major League Baseball began. Seventeen thousand players have gone through the league. So this is a sport that has seen it all.

But every once in a while, something happens that we have never seen before, something unique. And that's why it is my pleasure to stand here with the greatest comeback team in the history of baseball.

Last August, with just 31 games to play in the regular season, the Cardinals were 10½ games out of the playoff race. At one point, they had a less than 4 percent mathematical chance of making the playoffs. In Las Vegas, they were 500-to-1 longshots to win the World Series. And when Chris Carpenter pulled the team together for a meeting, his message was simple: Let's not embarrass ourselves. [*Laughter*] But through skills and guts and, I think the team would agree, just a little bit of luck—just a touch—this team made the playoffs. And even though they trailed in each of the series that followed, they somehow had the spirit and the determination and the resolve to survive.

Of course, the most memorable moment was game six of the World Series. I've got to say, that has to be one of the best baseball games of all time—unbelievable game. I will tell you guys, I had a bunch of early morning stuff the next day, and you kept me up. [*Laughter*] It was painful waking up the next morning, but what an incredible game. Five times, the Cardinals found themselves trailing; twice, they were down to the last strike. Then Mr. Freese here hits the first walk-off homer of his entire career to send it into game seven. Then the Cardinals put the Rangers away for good.

This team essentially played 2 months of elimination games, both to get into the playoffs, and then to win it all. But in Tony La Russa's words, "Sometimes you can't be afraid to make a mistake. Sometimes you just roll the dice and you let it go." That's what the former teammate of these folks, Albert Pujols, did when he joined Babe Ruth and Reggie Jackson as the only player to hit three home runs in a World Series game. That's what the outstanding ace, Chris Carpenter, did when he pitched the lights out against the Phillies and then came back to put the nail in the coffin against the Rangers. That's what David Freese did in game six—not bad for a kid who grew up dreaming of playing for the Cardinals. And even though he can't be here

today, that's what Tony La Russa did, winning his third title and then stepping down with the third most wins of any manager in history.

I will point out that he began as a White Sox, so—[*laughter*].

The First Lady. Let it go, honey. [*Laughter*]

The President. Everyone on this team follows the Cardinals way: They play all 27 outs, they never quit, they carry on the legacy of so many great Cardinals that have come before them.

Last year, I was honored to present Stan "The Man" Musial with one of the highest honors a President can bestow, the Medal of Freedom. And you could see Stan coming from about a mile away, because he was wearing that bright red blazer. There's no question he will always be a Cardinal at heart. And now this team is part of that long line of heroes.

So I want to congratulate not only the players, the owners, all the managers, and team officials, but also the fans, for a historic year. And I also want to thank them for visiting Walter Reed this morning, spending some time with our wounded warriors over there. That's what this organization's all about; it represents baseball at its best. And I wish them all the best this season.

Congratulations. Fantastic. Come on up.

St. Louis Cardinals President William O. DeWitt III. We've got a gift for you.

The President. Yeah, tell me what I got here. Tell me what I got.

St. Louis Cardinals Chairman and Chief Executive Officer William O. DeWitt, Jr. Thank you for those warm remarks and nice hospitality here. We've got a couple of gifts for you and Mrs. Obama.

The President. There you go.

William O. DeWitt, Jr. A World Series jersey with your name on the back, number 44.

The President. That's nice right there. [*Laughter*] There we go.

William O. DeWitt III. One for each.

William O. DeWitt, Jr. One for each. That one's yours.

The President. Yes.

William O. DeWitt, Jr. You can have that.

The President. Okay.

William O. DeWitt, Jr. And a World Series bat, for your—

The President. I'm a little bit worried about giving my wife a bat, though, if I—[*laughter*—if I mess up.

The First Lady. I'll take my bat. [*Laughter*]

The President. [*Inaudible*]

William O. DeWitt, Jr. It's great to be here. Thank you.

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Francis G. Slay of St. Louis, MO; Christopher J. Carpenter, pitcher, David R. Freese, third baseman, J. Alberto Pujols, first baseman, and Stanley F. Musial, former outfielder, St. Louis Cardinals; and Reginald M. Jackson, former right fielder, New York Yankees. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary included the introductory remarks of the First Lady.

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